

March 6, 2024 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

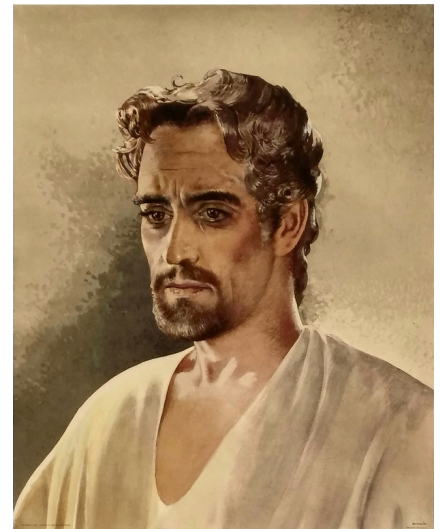
Passing in the Church

A Lebanese American Pastor shares the racism and hope he finds in the church.

By Christopher Tweel
for the Outlook

“You know, he supports Hamas.”

The conversation was overheard by our church’s administrator in the hallway. It was patently false — a hurtful accusation after I led a program about the Israel/Palestine conflict following the Oct. 7 Hamas — at the request of church program leaders. As an Arab American, this wasn’t the first time I experienced racism in the church. Many Arab Americans - especially people with parents from Lebanon like me - fit into a strange little pocket of America. We can pass as White but are reminded that our heritage is “other:” “Your dad/mom can’t be from Lebanon, you’re as White as I am!” Since 2001, well-meaning folks have told me that the world would be better off without the “dogs” or “degenerates” of those terrorist countries, not knowing my family was from one of them.



*We call him ‘Robert Downey Jesus’
Portrait of Jesus oil on canvas
Jacob Borosin c.1955*

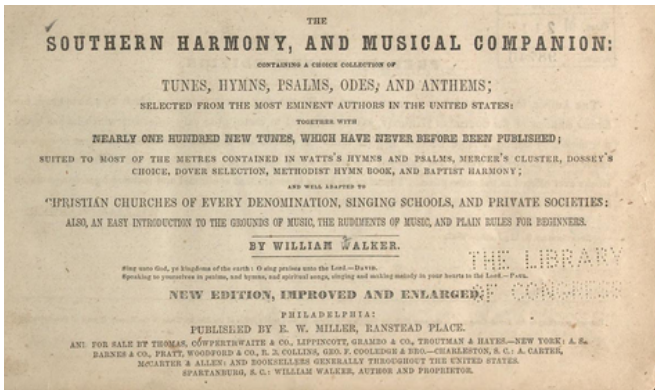
The story of the Lebanese American citizens started as an act of courtroom drama. It begins in 1915 with George Dow, who was from Batroun, a coastal town in what is today Lebanon, though at the time it was called “Syria” as part of the French colonial territory. Dow wanted to be an American citizen but was rejected several times. The Naturalization Act of 1790 stated that only “Whites” born in the U.S. could be citizens. An appendix in 1870 allowed for African Americans, but no one else – leaving millions without a pathway to naturalize.

The story of the Lebanese American citizens started as an act of courtroom drama. It begins in 1915 with George Dow, who was from Batroun, a coastal town in what is today Lebanon, though at the time it was called “Syria” as part of the French colonial territory. Dow wanted to be an American citizen but was rejected several times. The Naturalization Act of 1790 stated that only “Whites” born in the U.S. could be citizens. An appendix in 1870 allowed for African Americans, but no one else – leaving millions without a pathway to naturalize. Dow ultimately won his case against the state of South Carolina by questioning the courts on Jesus’ race. They said that Jesus was White. Since Dow was from the same place as Jesus, he argued he must also be White. He won the case. Subsequently, “Syrians” (this includes present-day Lebanon, Syria, and parts of Jordan, Iraq, etc.) would be White for the rest of American history.

Continued on p.3

OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

CLICK ON THE LOGOS



Music Notes for Sunday 10 March

The service music for the fourth Sunday in Lent is by American composers.

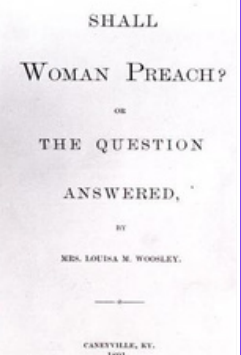
The music for the opening hymn, *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*, was included in a singing manual published in 1801 called *The Easy Instructor*. That collection formed the basis for *Southern Harmony*, 335 songs assembled and printed in 1835 by William “Singing Billy” Walker. *Southern Harmony* remains in print to this day, relatively unchanged since its subsequent publication in 1854.

This week’s special music will be *What Wondrous Love is This?*, whose melody dates back to the early 1600s. It was also used in the 1701 song, *The Ballad of Captain Kidd*. The marriage of tune and text as we know it today was one of the hundreds of tunes published in *Southern Harmony*. For this week’s musical offering, the melody is played on the recorder while the organ intones a drone underneath.

The closing hymn, *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light*, was composed in the summer of 1966 by organist/composer Kathleen Thomerson (b.1934). She called the tune HOUSTON after visiting the Church of the Redeemer in that coastal city in Texas.

Louisa Mariah Layman Woosley (March 24, 1862 - June 30, 1952) was the first woman ordained as a minister in any Presbyterian denomination. Woosley, a Cumberland Presbyterian from Kentucky, was ordained by Nolin Presbytery (Kentucky Synod) in that denomination on Tuesday, November 5, 1889. A great controversy developed, with the Synod instructing the Presbytery to remove her from their rolls. They responded by changing her status to *Minister in Transitu* to another presbytery.

In 1891, Woosley published her only book, *Shall Woman Preach?* which explained and justified her position.





Better
Together
Presbyterians in Action

Sunday, March 10
3:00-4:30 p.m.

2024 Better Together Speaker Series

Letting Mission Lead Us with Cindy Corell

What can our mission experience add to our whole church?
Let's learn together.

Finley Memorial Presbyterian Church
24 Finley Drive, Stuarts Draft, VA, 24450

*elevator and ramp entrances on left side of building

Phone: (540)337-3561 Church e-mail: finleypc1@verizon.net



Lenten Lunches



at FPC

Join each at noon Wednesday in Lent
for a simple meal
and discussion of the Book of James.

calvin and hobbes



Passing in the church, continued

Thus, the case for my supposed Whiteness was settled before I was born because American courts couldn't conceive of a Brown-skinned Christ. In the 2020 census, Arab Americans are still considered "White." And we wonder why so many of our churches display pictures of Caucasian 'Robert Downey Jesus'!

I know my story isn't unique. But like others who can pass, I have the privilege of not only closeting my heritage but also of being privy to the sometimes-callous mistakes of beloved congregants and staff.

The case for my supposed Whiteness was settled before I was born because American courts couldn't conceive of a Brown-skinned Christ. Kelly Brown Douglas writes in *Stand your ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* that American religious racism is a struggle against an insidious formula of thought brokered when Puritans aligned their faith to their Anglo-Saxon "roots," their Whiteness. As a country, as a religion, we're still fighting against this entrenched association.

I acknowledge there is work to do. Yet I do not lose heart. The church gives me reason to hope. Alongside inevitable prejudices, I also experience people's loving willingness to change, learn and grow. There are more allies than bigots. The church where I work has celebrated my family's history, delighting in our foods especially! I hear stories from peers about how their congregants are committed to hearing narratives that the church previously buried. Now, when I brush up against comments about "the Arabs" or the "violence of 'those' people," I know that it is an opportunity to invite someone to walk into a better way of life.

I am grateful that the story of the overheard comment in the church hallway has a caring resolution. Many similar narratives do not. In this story, the comment in the hallway was disavowed by church leadership. They recognized my Israel/Palestine program was not a personal agenda but a response to a request that came from church members because they believe the church is a place to offer reliable and loving truth. The session and I continue to make open paths for apology and reconciliation. That's the real desire. Not to punish or ostracize.

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When I experience a bigoted attack, it would be easier to say nothing. To shrug it off. For our sessions, it would be simpler to not get involved. To not make trouble. I am grateful that we chose to confront the comment. To reveal the hurt. To recommit ourselves to working for God's justice. If we, all of us, can continue to choose the harder path together, then the beauty that God places in us is unlimited.



Christopher is the pastor and head of staff at Three Chopt Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia. As a husband and father, he finds a blessed joy with family and in hiking mountain trails, canoeing the river, digging in the earth, and cutting the occasional piece of wood.



"Finally, we get to stop bitching about the weather and start bitching about our allergies."

This Week in History.



The United States Marine Corps executes the **first amphibious landing in history** at the Battle of Nassau.
March 3, 1776



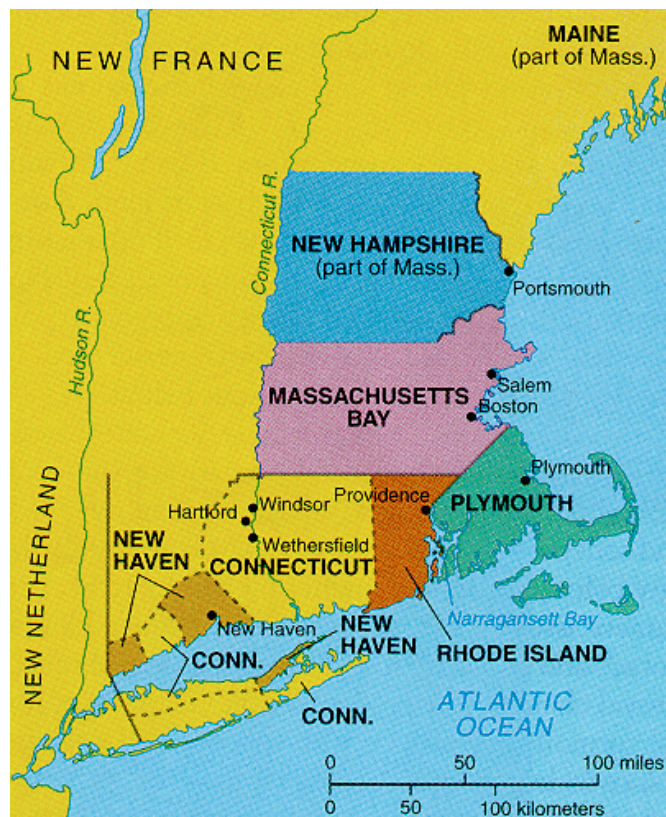
The **Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei** (Nathional Socialist German Workers, or Nazi Party) receives 43.9% in Reichstag elections, allowing the Nazis to pass the *Enabling Act*, which would establish a dictatorship under Chancellor Adolph Hitler.
March 5, 1933



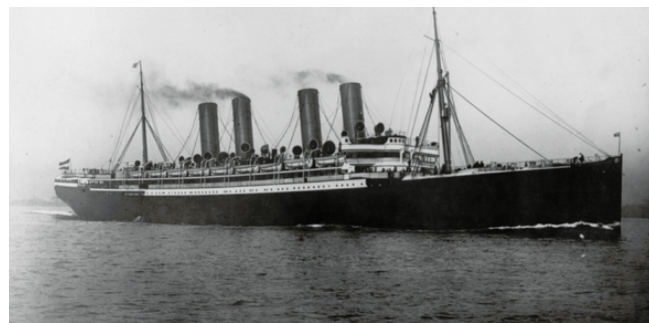
The **Prophet Muhammad** delivers his **خطبة الوداع**, or *Farewell Sermon* in the Uranah valley of Mount Arafat, during the annual Hajj.
March 6, 632



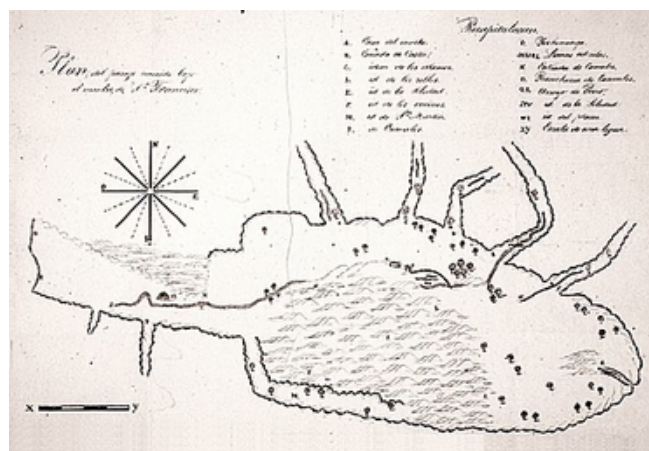
French aviatrix **Raymonde de Laroche** becomes the first woman to receive a pilot's license.
March 1910



The Massachusetts Bay Colony is granted a Royal charter from King Charles I of England.
March 4, 1628



German ocean liner **SS Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse** sends the first ship to shore wireless signals in history.
March 7, 1900



Gold is discovered at **Rancho San Francisco** (around present day Santa Clarita), six years before the California Gold Rush.
March 9 1842